

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SP-02 PM-05 NSC-05 SS-15 TRSE-00 /062 W
-----023667 101439Z /40
R 101400Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL TRIESTE
TO AMEMBASSY ROME
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0893

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E.O.: 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: ELECTIONS IN THE NORTHEAST
REF: TRIESTE 0201

1. SUMMARY. ABOUT 700,000 VOTERS ARE EXPECTED AT THE POLLS IN FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA JUNE 25 AND 26 TO ELECT NUMEROUS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. THE PARTIES ARE TAKING NO CHANCES IN EITHER THE REFERENDUM VOTE THIS WEEKEND OR THE ELECTIONS TWO WEEKS HENCE AND HAVE BEEN SENDING ALL THEIR HEAVYWEIGHTS INTO THE AREA FOR SOME TIME. (FANFANI, ROMITA, ZANONE, AND MALAGODI HAVE ALREADY SHOWN UP; BERLINGUER ACCEPTED AND THEN REGRETTED). EARTHQUAKE RECONSTRUCTION, THE OSIMO TREATY WITH YUGOSLAVIA, AND THE NAGGING LOCAL SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS HAD BEEN EXPECTED TO OVER-

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SHADOWN THE NATIONAL ISSUES, BUT THE KILLING OF THE UDINE PRISON GUARD BY THE RED BRIGADES JUNE 6, MAY HAVE CHANGED ALL THAT. TERRORISM, LAW AND ORDER, AND PCI PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY SEEM TO HAVE MOVED AHEAD OF PAROCHIAL CONCERNS. ALTHOUGH THE NORTHEAST IS DC COUNTRY (DOMINATED BY THE MOROTEI), IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE DC CAN DO VERY MUCH BETTER THAN ITS 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN THE 1973 REGIONAL ELECTIONS AND 42 PERCENT IN THE 1976 NATION ELECTIONS. THE PCI (21 PERCENT AND 26 PERCENT
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RESPECTIVELY) IS WEAKER HERE THAN ELSEWHERE IN THE NORTH AND WILL BE LUCKY TO HOLD ITS OWN. THE PSI, PSDI AND PRI WILL PROBABLY HANG ON TO THEIR VOTE. THE MSI AND LIBERALS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THEIR DOWNWARD SPIRAL. END SUMMARY.
2. IN A SCENE WORTHY OF ANY ITALIAN NATIONAL ELECTION, SOME 700,000 VOTERS WILL CAST BALLOTS JUNE 25-26 IN FRUILI-VENEZIA GIULIA FOR 14 PARTIES INCLUDING TWO SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS

--FRIULI MOVEMENT (FM) AND THE SLOVENE UNION (SU) IN FIVE VOTING DISTRICTS. LOCAL RULES MATCH THOSE AT THE NATION LEVEL IN COMPLEXITY.

3. UNTIL A FEW MONTHS AGO, DC PERFORMANCE (AND CHARGES OF CORRUPTION) IN EARTHQUAKE RELIEF/RECONSTRUCTION AND THE TRIESTE

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BUGABOO OF OSIMO WERE THOUGHT TO BE THE ONLY REAL ISSUES. FOLLOWING THE MORO KIDNAPPING AND ASSASSINATION, CONTINUING VIOLENCE IN ITALY, AND NOW THE RED BRIGADE KILLING OF A PRISON GUARD IN UDINE ON JUNE 6, TERRORISM, AND LAW-AND-ORDER AND PCI PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY ARE THE REAL CONCERNS HERE.

4. AS FOR THE EARTHQUAKE, THE COMMUNISTS HEAD THE REGIONAL COUNCIL'S COMMISSION FOR RECONSTRUCTION. UNDERSTANDABLY, THEY HAVE SAID LITTLE ABOUT CORRUPTION, THE SLOW PACE OF RECONSTRUCTION AND THE LIKE.

5. THE NEVRALGIC POINT FOR THE DC IS TRIESTE AND OSIMO. TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS' CREDIT THEY ARE MEETING THAT ISSUE HEAD ON, EMPHASIZING TRIESTE'S EUROPEAN ROLE IN THE NEW SCHEME OF THINGS. THE PCI IS DOING MUCH THE SAME. MOREOVER, THE DC HAS INCLUDED MANY NEW PEOPLE PRIMARILY FROM PROMINENT TRIESTE FAMILIES AS INDEPENDENTS ON ALL ITS LISTS TO UNDERCUT SUPPORT FOR THE SO-CALLED LISTA CIVICA.

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6. ONE NAGGING PROBLEM, HOWEVER, IS THE DC-PCI RELATIONSHIP AND HOW TO RECONCILE THE ROME SITUATION WITH LOCAL REALITIES. AS ONE MAJOR DC LEADER TOLD US, PEOPLE DIDN'T VOTE FOR THE DC

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TO HAVE IT STRIKE A DEAL WITH PCI. THE DEVILISH PROBLEM IS HOW TO RUN AN ELECTION WITHOUT UPSETTING THE PARLIAMENTARY ACCORD IN ROME. FOR THAT REASON THE DC IS RELUCTANT TO HIT THE PCI HARD.

7. A STEADY STREAM OF PARTY CHIEFTAINS HAS BEEN MAKING NUMEROUS APPEARANCES IN THE PAST WEEKS ON BEHALF OF LOCAL LEADERS. FANFANI WAS IN TRIESTE JUNE 8, FOR A MORO COMMEMORATION ORGANIZED BY CITY HALL. ALL HAD THE GOOD TASTE TO AVOID MENTIONING THE ELECTIONS. BERLINGUER WAS DUE HERE LAST WEEK BUT WAS INDIPOSED AT THE LAST MOMENT AND DID NOT SHOW UP MOEN.

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8. VOTERS ARE CONFRONTED WITH A BEWILDERING SET OF ISSUES, LOCAL ALLEGIANCES, AND DEEP CONCERN ABOUT "WHITHER ITALY". BECAUSE OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE QUESTIONS, VOTERS MAY WELL RELY ON TRADITIONAL VOTING PATTERNS. THUS, THE DC WILL CERTAINLY AT LEAST EQUAL ITS 42 PERCENT OF THE VOTE WON IN THE PAST YEARS; THE PCI FOR THE SAME REASONS WILL BE HARD PUT TO HANG ON TO THE 26 PERCENT WON IN THE 1976 NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO SETTLE FOR 21 PERCENT WON IN THE 1973 REGIONAL ELECTIONS.

9. THE SOCIALISTS DO WELL IN THE NORTHEAST AND CAN COUNT ON ABOUT 12 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS AND PROBABLY MORE. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

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AND THE REPUBLICANS HAVE STRING LOCAL LEADERS, A FAITHFUL FOLLOWING, AND A LONG-TERM RECORD AS CAOLITION PARTNERS FOR THE DC. THE MSI AND LIBERALS HAVE THE SAME PROBLEMS HERE AS ELSEWHERE AND WILL CONTINUE THEIR SLIDE. THE FRIULI AND SLOVENE MOVEMENTS ARE CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE "ITALIAN PARTIES". THEY ARE POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT IN THE CITIES OF UDINE AND TRIESTE, BUT TOGETHER THEY POLL ONLY SEVERAL PERCENTAGE POINTS IN THE ENTIRE REGION.

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10. COMMENT. PATTERN OF REGIONAL ELECTORAL SUCCESSES FOR THE DC AND LIKE-MINDED PARTIES COMBINED WITH PCI LOSSES IS A SIGNIFICANT DEBUNKER OF PCI INVINCIBILITY AND MARXIST INEVITABILITY; THIS

DEVELOPMENT IS A MIXED BLESSING, HOWEVER, AS INCREASED DC LOCAL STRENGTH IS IN CONTRADICTION WITH RELATIVE DC WEAKNESS IN ROME WHERE PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT MAJORITY IS A MUST TO KEEP ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT IN PLACE. MUCH OF THE DC VOTE IN THE NORTH-EAST (FRIULI, VENETO, TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE) IS BASICALLY ANTI-PCI AND LOCAL CITIZENS SEE DC-PCI PARLIMENTARY RELATIONSHIP AS ANOMALOUS, THOROUGHLY DISAGREEABLE, AND UNNECESSARY AT BEST. THUS, THE DC LEADERSHIP'S BIGGEST PROBLEM IS HOW TO HANDLE SUCCESS IN THE PROVINCES (THE BACKBONE OF THE PARTY) AND STILL KEEP THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT IN ROME. MOEN.

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